AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF THE SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY ON JUVENILES IN GEORGIA

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An Analysis of the Effects of the Social Disorganization Theory on Juveniles in Georgia

by

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BY

ANNA MARIE WATSON

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ABSTRACT

Social disorganization is represented by an inability of community members to attain mutual goals or to resolve commonly experienced problems (Bursik, 1988). Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay were the first sociologists to denote this occurrence in Chicago. Shaw and McKay are examined as reputable sociologists and a summary of their work on this topic is discussed. This thesis sought to determine the social disorganization in Georgia by examining and analyzing the rates of juvenile delinquency. This thesis contains a literature review, a methodology and an analysis section. The literature review covered the history of the theory, tracing it back to the 1930's. The Methodology section detailed the approaches and techniques used to gather data and research. The research and analysis focused primarily on the arrest numbers and criminal offense of the juveniles in Georgia and compared those with the residential stability, ethnic diversity, and family disorder levels of that area.

INDEX WORDS: Georgia, Social Disorganization, Juvenile Delinquency

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INTRODUCTION

With any increase of population, comes the inevitable rise in criminal activity. A previously studied trend between growing cities and crime linked rates of delinquency with social disorganization. Social disorganization is represented by an inability of community members to attain mutual goals or to resolve commonly experienced problems (Bursik, 1988). Juvenile delinquency is the violation of criminal laws by an individual who is under a certain age set forth by a legal statute (Ireland & Rush, 2011). Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay were the first sociologists to denote this occurrence in Chicago. Examples of this disorganization theory are behaviors such as drug dealing, gang presence, and prostitution. Physical characteristics representative of this theory are broken windows, abandoned cars, and vandalized houses and shops (Marco, Gracia, Tomás & López-Quílez, 2015). The compilation of these features is theorized to break down order and social control; therefore, decreasing the quality of life (Marco et al. 2015). This thesis sought to determine the social disorganization in Georgia by examining and analyzing the rates of juvenile delinquency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 1930's and the 1940's, Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay conducted sociological studies on juvenile delinquency. These works were considered very important to the criminology world in that time period and continue to be well known in the social science world today. They authored and updated a book called *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Area (1969).* This book and articles by Shaw and McKay (1930- 1969) are referenced in many modern criminology compilations. One key finding among the researchers was the occurrence of high delinquency areas adjoining to commerce and industry locations, such as the center of the city. Their work in these fields can be divided into three key areas: the collection of juvenile delinquent autobiographies, research on correlation between geographical location and delinquency, and the creation of the Chicago Area Project (CAP) for delinquency prevention. The CAP was an attempt to reform areas in the hopes of decreasing delinquency rates by community members (Snodgrass, 1976).

The criminological contributions of Shaw and McKay were influenced by a larger, social sciences movement known as "the social ecology school". The Sociology Department at the University of Chicago was the hub of this school and direction was primarily given by Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess. Shaw and McKay were students at the University of Chicago during the early 1920's. This was when they developed an interest for the city of Chicago itself, with an emphasis on the areas that were considered to be "social problems". This movement, "social ecology", provided students with an avenue for research on social problems in relation to ecological theories. The University's Sociology Department advocated for student empirical research, fieldwork, and participant observation. Many sociological works used case study methods and ecological law to examine urban behavior (Snodgrass, 1976).

Until Shaw and McKay first came to Chicago to begin their graduate work, they had never experienced much urban living. Both were from rural areas in the Midwest with Christian backgrounds and degrees from small denominational colleges. In August of 1895, Clifford Shaw was born in Luray, Indiana. He was the fifth of ten children and was born into a Protestant, Scottish- Irish, and Republican family. His father was a general store owner that also worked as a shoemaker and harness-maker. At 15, he went to Adrian College in Michigan to study the ministry. By the end of his junior year, he left the church and joined the U.S. Navy. He trained at Johns Hopkins University to be a pharmacist assistant, but the war ended before he ever saw the battlefield. By 1918, Shaw was finishing up his degree at Adrian and then continued onto graduate studies at the University of Chicago. While attending school there, he lived at a place called "House of Happiness", near inner city Chicago. Here he was abruptly awakened to the depravity of the slums near his residence (Snodgrass, 1976).

Shaw had begun part-time work as a parole officer for the Illinois State Training School for Boys at St. Charles from 1921-1923. He was then employed as a probation officer from 1924-1926 at the Cook County Juvenile Court. Upon obtaining their graduate degrees, they would go on to work with one another for 30 years as a research team for the Institute for Juvenile Research in Chicago. Even though he continued his studies at the University, Shaw did not receive his Ph. D. In addition to his research at the George Williams College and the Central Y.M.C. A. College, Shaw taught criminology. In the 1920's, the Institute for Juvenile Research and the Sociology Department had become the base for Shaw and McKay's research projects (Snodgrass, 1976).

Henry D. McKay, the statistician of the two, was born in Hand County, South Dakota in December 1899. His family was originally from Scotland. His grandfather only migrated to America in the 1870's. These are possible reasons for his keen observance of race and nationality playing a vital part in criminology. McKay worked the family farm for much of his young life before receiving a degree from Dakota Wesleyan University. He arrived four years after Shaw to Chicago to continue on with graduate work. McKay later began to teach at the University of Illinois. In 1926, he returned to Chicago and began working with Clifford Shaw (Snodgrass, 1976).

In the course of both the sociologists' lives, they started to develop a concentration in certain areas of delinquent behavior. McKay was particularly interested in delinquency within races and nationalities. In their work, they discovered that the residence in a deteriorated area caused high delinquency rates across nationalities. Once those individuals moved, the rates dropped. The city of Chicago was, at the time, undergoing integration and nationalities were separating to outer regions of Chicago. It was determined that the crime and delinquency rates were caused by those social conditions rather than the ethnic origins (Snodgrass, 1976).

In analyzing data from their research in Chicago, the researchers used several different mechanisms: spot maps, zone maps, radial maps, and rate maps. They began by plotting the residences of delinquents on maps of Chicago. These 'spot maps' showed the residential distribution of juvenile offenders with one spot per case. The 'zone maps' exhibited, at one-mile intervals from the city center, the delinquency rates in concentric zones. 'Radial maps' used regular intervals along main axes from the city center to show the rate of delinquency. And finally, the 'rate maps' indicated the amount of offenders per one hundred individuals of the same age and sex in square mile distributions (Snodgrass, 1976).

Shaw and McKay noticed a pattern of social disorganization, the collapse of social controls in the communities positioned within the transitional zones (area surrounding a business district). They observed an influx of businesses invading former residential living areas resulting in social incoherency and disruption of traditional norms. A major finding in their research was that the transitional zones had the largest concentration of delinquent residences. They also found that the delinquency rates declined with increased distance from the center of the city to more suburban communities. This analysis was researched on twenty large cities and the Chicago results of concentration and delinquency were applicable in those cities as well (Snodgrass, 1976).

The central business district played a role in the development of these socially disorganized areas. Owners of land and property in areas where business districts were expanding realized that those areas would eventually be bought by businesses and demolished to create factories or stores. Therefore, the owners stopped or decreased the amount of maintenance they performed on the current residential housing units that were on these pieces of property. The areas gradually deteriorated, thus the creation of slums. Immigrants and impoverished individuals were drawn to these areas for their low property rental fees and the proximity to the city. These lower class individuals would have the children that would become the 'delinquents' (Snodgrass, 1976).

Shaw and McKay concluded that juvenile delinquency was intrinsic in the community. They thought that there were specific forces in the community that linger with each decade in fostering juvenile delinquency. It becomes generational and any group that is around this is guaranteed to be infected regardless of culture or ethnicity. The aforementioned forces are distinguished by the environmental aspects of the community, such as proximity to the city

center, presence of new enterprises, and geography of the area. The rates of delinquency were not as closely related to family factors and interpersonal relationships as they were with the social atmosphere of the community (Jonassen, 1949).

The theory of social disorganization suggests that characteristics of a city affect the probability of victimization and violent crime. The rates of crime and violence in an area and their influence on communities and neighborhoods are investigated by these theorists. Much research has attributed high crime rates with disadvantaged neighborhoods. A neighborhood would be distinguished as a subsection of a larger community categorized by a defined physical area and influenced by ecological, political, and cultural factors (Sampson et al. 2002). Residents of neighborhoods with prevalent crime and interpersonal violence typically have a lower socioeconomic status, higher rates of population density and many degrees of ethnic heterogeneity (Benson & Fox, 2002).

The facets of high crime rates also include the rise in intimate partner violence, domestic abuse, and child abuse in many cases. The main theory is that the correlation between the environmental conditions and violence consequentially is the result of the success or failure of formal and informal social controls in the neighborhood. Formal social controls are implemented by government officials, police officers, and employers, and practiced through laws and regulations. Informal social controls are exercised by society, personal relationships, and social norms and reinforced by criticism, shame and gossip (Ireland and Rush, 2011). Violence is merely a byproduct of the neighborhood's deviance levels, or the lack of normal and socially acceptable behaviors (Benson & Fox, 2002). Social disorganization's reach extends into lower birth weights, higher infant mortality, increased rate of school dropout, and child abuse (Sampson, Morenoff & Gannon- Rowley, 2002).

The residents in these areas are not pressured by high normative expectations from society to resist violence. Therefore, they are liberated from social norms and commit crimes and violent acts. In a recent study in disorganized areas, especially among minority men, one such deviant behavior- violence in interpersonal relationships- is viewed as normal, acceptable, and sometimes required by the "code of the street". In this neighborhood, individuals have weak social ties with neighbors, live in overcrowded housing developments or households, and face lesser forms of social control. Law enforcement officers that are lenient with these individuals view these areas as morally deprived and allow some crime to continue simply as 'just deserts'. Among the residents is also a greater tolerance for deviant acts and a lack of assets and resources to respond to and prevent criminal activity in the area. There is also the absence of connections and examples of normative social behavior (Benson & Fox 2002). These predictors of social disorganization are coupled with the amount of poverty in an area and isolation of racial groups. Oftentimes, single-parent families are residents in these areas and typically do not own their homes, but instead rent or lease for affordability purposes (Sampson et al. 2002).

A number of socially disorganized communities are racial minorities and suffer from various socioeconomic and environmental problems. Inner city Philadelphia, for example, has a growing murder rate; old and waning housing; failing schools; little to no job opportunities; and a rising property tax. Crime control policies here target notorious drug markets by geographical location. This war on drugs was similar to the initiative in the 1980's and resulted in an increased number of individuals incarcerated while waiting for the trial and serving their sentence (Fader, 2013).

Two successful strategies that targeted crime were implemented in Boston and New York. Both would be beneficial to the criminal justice system in Georgia if applied. Boston's Comprehensive Communities Program has been nationally recognized for its approach to fighting crime. It was a neighborhood based strategy collaborated on by criminal justice and social service departments to include a well-rounded response to commission of crime. Boston initiated more community policing and support for juvenile offenders. Rehabilitating juvenile offenders and increasing police support in the community aided in the success of this strategy. Their main target was gang leaders and communicating to their members not to partake in violence. New York also had a successful crime control approach under the leadership of Rudy Giuliani. He applied the broken windows theory to reduce public order crime, increase sanctions, and increase the police presence in those neighborhoods. The broken windows theory is a public safety theory on how neighborhoods deteriorate rapidly if initial cases of vandalism, such as broken windows or graffiti, are ignored by the law enforcement. The premise of this theory is that police officers should take cases seriously and residents repair damage promptly or they invite additional incivilities. New York recognized the need for implementing quality of life offense punishments decreases more serious crimes. Both of these strategies saw a decrease in juvenile delinquency (Fader, 2013).

The study by Jeff M. Chambers and D. Wayne Osgood was a measure of the delinquency among juveniles ages 11-17 by per capita arrest rate in each county. The study was conducted from 1989 through 1993. The following were outcome measures: rates of arrest for homicide, forcible rape, aggravated assault, weapons offense, robbery, simple assault, and the UCR Violent crime index. The full range of offenses was considered during the study to aid in the establishment of the consistency of the conclusions (2000).

In Chambers and Osgood's study, the arrest rate is defined as the number of arrests in a county divided by the size of the juvenile population. The samples of nonmetropolitan cities studied were in Nebraska, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. The study comprised 264 counties with populations ranging from 560 to 98,000. The average population of these nonmetropolitan counties was around 10,000. The social disorganization theory postulates that numerous variables- residential instability, ethnic diversity, family disruption, population size or density, closeness to urban areas, and economic status- effect a community's ability to foster and maintain strong social relationships. This study tested the theory's applicability to rural settings by examining relationships in these communities with other variables and rates of offending. These same relationships are the basis for the theory in urban locations (Chambers & Wayne, 2000).

The community feels the effects of social disorganization on an individual level. Members often experience a range of emotions like fear, distrust, helplessness, and anxiety. These feelings sometimes cause residents to draw back from engaging in community life and thus increase disorder and decline within the area (Marco et al. 2015). The catalyst of social disorganization then causes a downward spiral of adverse effects. Urban decay, increased social problems, and lack of confidence in law enforcement are all community symptoms (Marco et al. 2015).

Juveniles that live in disorganized neighborhoods suffer in more ways than one. In an average community with positive social controls, neighbors would alert one another of suspicious activity or intervene in situations on behalf of children. Those residents would be acting on beliefs that were mutually respected and expected by the community. However, people are less likely to intercede in areas where norms are unclear and there is a general mistrust

among residents. Standing up for the public good is difficult in situations where the lines are blurred. Juveniles in the disorganized neighborhoods also lacked informal guardianship by residents (Bellair, 2000) and supervision of certain adolescent peer groups (Sampson et al. 2002).

One researcher defined this concept, collective efficacy, as the bond of shared trust and desire to intervene for the public good within a neighborhood (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Socially disorganized areas lack this feature and this is possibly a reason for elevated crime rates among residents, particularly juveniles. The other outcomes of this theory include those of mental health: greater mental distress, risk taking and deviant peer associations amidst juveniles. Depression and other forms of psychological issues are currently being studied as variables in disorderly regions (Sampson et al. 2002).

The focus of the aforementioned studies is on juvenile delinquency as the primary indicator of social disorganization. Juveniles are affected by their circumstances and environments. Adolescence is a pivotal period of shaping behaviors and ideologies that are carried into adulthood. There are characteristics displayed by juveniles that would reveal a neighborhood or community's lack of social control (Wright, Kim, Chassin, Losoya & Piquero, 2014). Early sexual encounters in juveniles, teenage childbearing, and behavior disorder have been identified as prevalent occurrences in disorganized neighborhoods (Sampson et al. 2002).

In conducting research on this topic, three different approaches are generally taken. To measure the level of social disorganization, the first approach looks at the neighborhood objectively and uses government data sources as its basis. Its downfall is that certain time frames and lack of focus on the theory make it less optimal for this type of research. The second relies on the residents' perceptions of disorganization within the neighborhood based on physical and

social characteristics. This study would attempt to gauge community members' fear of crime, amount of influence of racial, ethnic, and social stereotype on perceptions of disorder. Lastly, a third method uses a more systematic and objective observation technique carried out by professional researchers. This form of research is more easily replicated and independent measurements cover an array of factors (Marco et al. 2015).

In collecting evidence of certain theories, researchers must properly define and specify what constitutes a neighborhood or community. Establishing this base allows for proper identification and the ability of other researchers to understand the true extent of the study. Two researchers in particular defined a local community as "natural areas", developed from businesses and groups of people vying for reasonable housing situations. A neighborhood is simply a part of this larger community and oftentimes reflects the social, cultural, and political views of the whole. Neighborhoods are typically defined by their geographic locations. It is typical of researchers to use data from national databases such as the Census Bureau, which defines neighborhoods geographically as well (Sampson et al. 2002).

A juvenile's likelihood of recidivating, or reoffending after serving a sentence for a prior criminal offense, is often an indicator of social disorganization. To measure or predict recidivism rates, researchers use a Comprehensive Risk and Needs (CRN) assessment risk score. Certain characteristics like age, race, and gender are connected with recidivism. Risk factors for offending juveniles that aid in predicting recidivism rates are prior offense history, family and social factors, and educational factors. Researchers note a correlation between education levels, substance abuse history, and clinical history as dynamics of recidivism, as well. Offense history was cited as the main predictor of impending reoffending (Buckner, 2011). Social

disorganization, based on the presence of the aforesaid factors, would have a direct effect on recidivism rates.

Further analyses of juveniles that reenter the criminal justice system showed that there are specific primary risks. A juvenile's delinquent peer relations, social attitudes, misbehavior problems and family relationships are also leading causes. Social disorganization is known to play a role in increasing numbers of recidivists. A youth's neighborhood and community can project pressure on the juvenile to reoffend indirectly and directly. While most Georgia juvenile correction facilities report that more than 60 percent of juveniles do not go on to reoffend, the population that does is largely male and African American. Georgia has an average recidivism rate of 33 percent after a one year period in comparison to other states (Buckner, 2011).

Research has revealed that metro areas such as Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah have much higher one year recidivism rates (Buckner, 2010). This follows the theory of social disorganization that areas close to cities and business districts are often under stress and juvenile delinquency is a byproduct of those communities. The Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has a very unbalanced racial and ethnic population. Contact with minorities has been a challenge for the adult and juvenile corrections systems across the nation. In Georgia, the population is 65 percent Caucasian, 30 percent African American, and 7 percent Latino. However, the juvenile offender population in the state is 60 percent African American (Garland, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

In this thesis, the data has previously been collected and published in a government document or academic journal. The resources are authentic and valid. Many government documents aided in the development of the research section of this thesis. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is a national resource with information on juvenile delinquency and victimization statistics. The National Survey of Families and Households and the Federal Census Catalog are two other databases that are referenced.

The Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) released many current statistics on intake populations, offense profiles, and the gender and race of offenders. The research was based off the current 2013 Research Library Admissions statistics for the juvenile justice system in four regions. The regions are broken up geographically: northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast. The regions are further divided into a total of 12 districts (Garland, 2010). The amount of intake admissions in the juvenile justice system of Georgia was studied to find the most prevalent regions of juvenile delinquency. Those areas were further be studied by their recidivism rates, which are an indicator of social disorganization, and the places with the highest amounts were separated from the whole and supplemental statistics from those regions was gathered. To analyze the extent of social disorganization, the levels of poverty, single parent homes, and education levels were collected from Census Bureau.

The research focused primarily on the arrest rate and criminal offense of the juveniles in Georgia. This was compared with the residential stability, ethnic diversity, and family disorder. A study was done in 2000, by Jeff M. Chambers and D. Wayne Osgood on the effects of the community on youth violence. Those three variables were the most commonly linked with

criminal activity and delinquency that they found. This thesis expanded on that by including rural and suburban communities. Numbers and statistics were presented in tables and graphs. These were further explained in detail as to the relevance of the data and the importance of the figures collected. A few suggestions for improvement for the criminal justice system in Georgia were listed. This thesis used the three most prevalent variables and extended the data included to suburban areas.

Table 1 presented the data of juvenile delinquents in Alabama and Georgia that were in residential facilities. After a juvenile has been adjudicated, the juvenile judge assigns them to commitment or a short term program in a residential facility (State of Georgia, 2013). The table reviews the three major races and crimes committed by juveniles that had to serve their sentence in a residential facility. Georgia has high juvenile offense numbers committed by African Americans and crimes against persons. This table compared values with a neighboring state similar in ethnic and economic makeup.

Table 1: Juvenile Delinquents' Profiles in Alabama and Georgia Residential Facilities 2013 (Sickmund, Sladky, Kang, and Puzzanchera, 2015)

Juvenile Delinquents' Profiles in Alabama and Georgia Residential Facilities 2013								
	White	Black	Hispanic	Crimes Against Persons	Aggravated Assaults	Property Crimes	Drug Offenses	Totals
Alabama	345	555	21	201	102	219	42	933
Georgia	321	1107	93	696	246	333	42	1557

Figure 1 is the map of Georgia as provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice that distinguishes the four geographic regions of the state that are referenced in Table 2. The four regions are northwest, northeast, southwest and southeast.

Figure 1: Map of Georgia- DJJ Four Regions (Niles, 2015)

In Table 2, the DJJ reported these numbers for the admissions of juveniles by region for the year 2013. Admission refers to the number of youth admitted to DJJ. Once a youth enters DJJ, they are placed into intake, which is a legal term meaning that adjudication is pending (State of Georgia, 2013). Adjudication is the juvenile term for conviction. This table compared the racial and gender numbers per region. A high number of male offenders were reported in all regions. The NW and NE regions had higher numbers of delinquents overall due to their proximity to urban areas and higher population levels than the south east rural counterpart. Table 2 also supported the racial and gender disparity in the GA juvenile justice system with high levels of particularly black males.

Table 2: DJJ Admissions Demographic by Region (State of Georgia, 2013).

DJJ Admissions Demographic by Region- 2013				
Region	Northwest	Northeast	Southwest	Southeast
Male	6205	5304	4102	2353
Female	2770	2427	2265	1185
White	3952	2966	1867	1323
Black	4256	3893	4200	1995
Hispanic	589	669	214	132
Other Ethnicity	178	203	86	88

Table 3 showed the values of criminal offenses by juveniles per region that have been admitted into the DJJ and are awaiting adjudication. It should be noted that property crimes are by far the most common in all the regions. Property crimes degrade the appearance and quality of life within a community. Regions with high numbers of property crimes would likely have areas within that would be impacted by the broken windows theory. The southeastern region possesses the least amount of juvenile delinquency. Once again, this is most likely due to large amounts of rural areas which are not often paired with social disorder.

Table 3: DJJ Admissions Profile by Region (State of Georgia, 2013).

DJJ Admissions Offense Profile by Region- 2013				
Region	Northwest	Northeast	Southwest	Southeast
Drug Offense	853	571	432	253
Property Offense	1751	1659	1594	761
Public Order	1243	927	1250	603
Violent Crime	1629	1356	957	575
Weapons Offense	193	190	111	63

Figure 2 is the map that distinguishes the districts presented in Table 3 as provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice in 2011. Districts 3B and 3A are part of the greater Metro-Atlanta area. District 1,2, and 11 are primarily rural communities.

Figure 2: DJJ Map of Districts (Buckner, 2011)

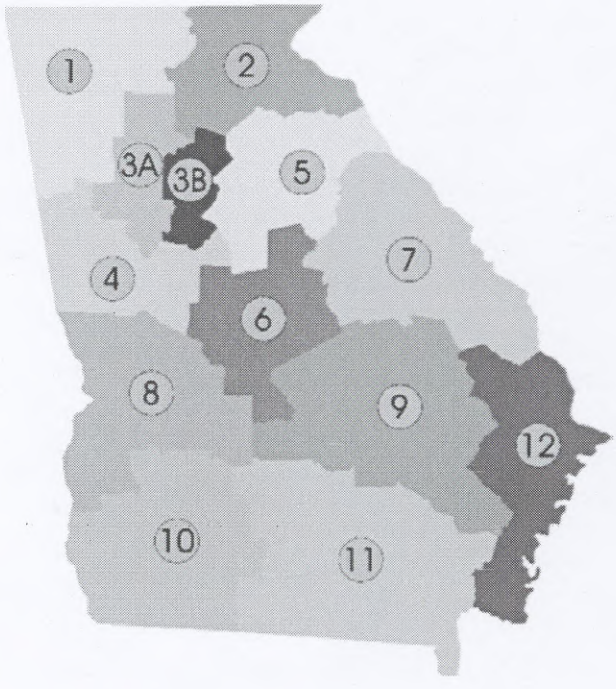

Table 4 detailed the recidivism rates per district as established by the Department of Juvenile Justice for the year of 2009. The measure of recidivism is the adjudication of delinquency that resulted from the commission of a new felony or misdemeanor. The DJJ reported the recidivating events for juveniles who had been placed under their supervision. At the point of the juvenile's first release into the community, measurement begins and continues for at least one year. The recidivism rate separates each release into the community and looks at the multiple recidivating occasions for the same juvenile as unique recidivating events (Buckner, 2011). The districts with the highest rates of recidivism were in District 6, which includes Macon, and District 12, which includes Savannah. They exceed the states average recidivism rate. 3B and 3A are part of the greater Metro-Atlanta area. Columbus is part of District 8 and also has high rates of recidivism. High rates of recidivism are common in areas with urban development. A youth's community can pressure juveniles to reoffend indirectly and directly.

Table 4: One Year Recidivism Rate in GA by DJJ District -2009 (Buckner, 2011)

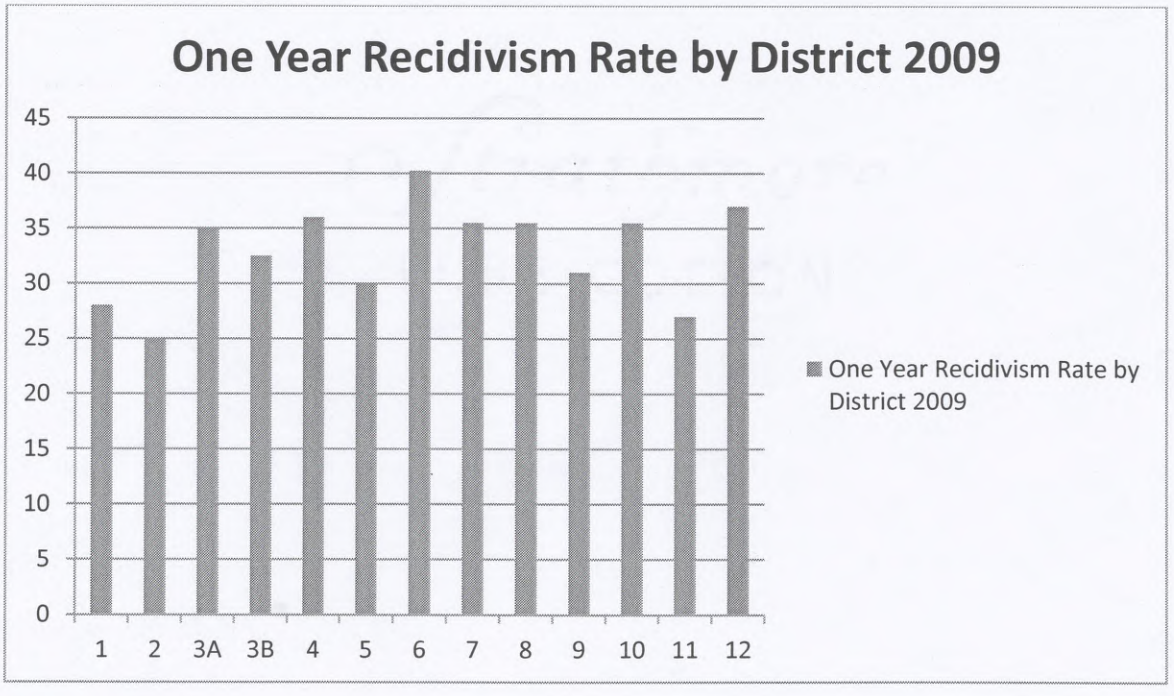

Table 5 further studies those districts with high recidivism rates. Savannah and Atlanta are similar in number, percentages and income levels as the average in the whole state of Georgia. Macon and Columbus were two cities analyzed that differed substantially from the state average. The percentage of households represents the number of non-family, female householder, and male householder residences in the city. The remaining percentage would be married couple households. The educational attainment level is a percentage of the number of individuals that are of age that have completed at least a high school education.

Table 5: Comparative Data on Highest Recidivating Metropolitan Areas in Georgia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Comparative Data on Highest Recidivating Metropolitan Areas in Georgia					
2014	Georgia	Atlanta*	Savannah*	Macon	Columbus
Median household income	$47,829	$55, 733	$48, 812	$39, 484	$40, 499
Individuals Below Poverty level	18-19 %	16%	17.8%	25.1%	23.1%
Children (Under 18) Below Poverty	27%	23%	25%	40%	35%
Population	9,992,167	5,524,693	527,563	230,000	202,824
Educational Attainment High school	85.5%	88.2 %	89%	82.5%	86.1%
Households- Male, Female, or non family householder	42%	41%	42%	47%	54%

*Atlanta- Sandy Springs- Roswell Ga Metro Area is the statistical area for data on Atlanta

*Savannah- Hinesville- Statesboro, GA statistical area

ANALYSIS

In the literature review, many factors were discussed that influence social disorganization levels. Lower socioeconomic status, higher ethnic diversity, and population density were all seen in the collected data as paralleling the rates of juvenile delinquency. The data followed the theory of social disorganization that areas close to cities and business districts are often under distress and lack some forms of structured social control, with juvenile delinquency as a byproduct.

Some contradictions to Shaw and McKay's theories of social disorganization have been discussed and studied over time by other sociologists. One key discrepancy some scholars argue is that the process of growing the transitional zones was embedded with conflict. Shaw and McKay denote the business elites as withholding all resources from the lower class. The theory also somewhat implies that the capitalist enterprises and other institutions ruined communities and the development was accepted without concern for human displacement and well-being. The previous residents of these districts were portrayed as powerless and politically incapable (Snodgrass, 1976).

The other analysis of the research interpretations dealt with the allocation of responsibility of natural laws in causing the shift and increasing delinquency. Shaw and McKay believed the process that created the transitional zone was an inherent one based on ecological laws. It was the natural growth of expansion in the city that caused the social disorganization in the community. The problem with using nature to explain these physical, economic, and political conditions is the lack of human responsibility for the social welfare. "The laws of nature created

a cheap labor market, human degradation and exploitation, and pre-ordained that one would have slums and delinquency (Snodgrass, 1976)."

Another critique of the study done by Shaw and McKay is on the large quantity of factors that would need to be constant in order to make accurate assessments of court records over the timespan of the study. Some of these dynamics that affect delinquency rates can be separated into two general categories:

A. Factors that Influence Rates of Delinquency, but May Not Directly Influence It's Behavior:
    a. Definition of delinquency by law and statutes.
    b. Difference in enforcement by police of delinquent behavior
    c. Differences in policy and discretion of the court systems.
    d. Existence of sanctions or non-court procedures for dealing with delinquency.
B. Factors that Directly Affect Delinquent Behavior:
    a. Economic and social forces.
    b. Variation of social conditions in local regions at certain times.
    c. Ecological characteristics of locations.
    d. Socio-economic standing of delinquent's family or environment.
    e. Population demographics, age, sex composition.
    f. Cultural and ethnic groups of the area.

The constant variable checked by Shaw and McKay was the ethnic background, however much data was not presented on the changing variables that could have produced different results (Jonassen, 1949).

Macon, GA had the highest rates of poverty among individuals and poverty among children (almost 1.5 times the state average). It is important to note that poverty rates among children are a key indicator of social disorganization. Low income and need for survival often forces children into the life of delinquency. Macon also had a lower percentage of individuals who had achieved at least a high school diploma. This conveys somewhat of a lower socioeconomic status in adults, who in turn impact the community as a whole. Columbus, GA had the second highest rate of poverty among the four specifically studied. Georgia's state average for child poverty is 27 %. Columbus had a rate of 35%. Columbus also had an unusually low number of married households. Most of the residences live in single parent homes (male or female householders) or nontraditional homes. In prior research, it was theorized that areas with high levels of single parent homes affected the rates of juvenile delinquency and social disorganization (Sampson et al. 2002). Overall, Macon and Columbus were studied and are theorized to be the most socially disorganized areas in the state.

The main limitation in this study was the lack of access to local, recent data. Juvenile records are handled very securely and oftentimes might not be available for sensitivity reasons. Juvenile records can also be sealed once they reach adulthood. Further research should be done on a more individualized level. This would help identify factors that the juvenile personally feels is causing delinquency and compare it with other juvenile delinquents in those neighborhoods. It would also be beneficial to look at one particular urban city and study the neighborhoods. The variables that differ on the statewide scale, such as cost of living, educational attainment, and poverty levels might not be as different on a citywide scale, but perhaps closer related. Therefore, one could isolate delinquency rates to more specific variables.

High levels of juvenile delinquency and social disorganization threaten a community's overall well-being and future adult incarcerated population. Delinquent juveniles are more likely grow up into more serious criminals, possibly increasing the violent or abnormal aspects of certain crimes. In past studies of similar subject matter, there have been many clinical implications for intervention and prevention practices. There is a strong association between the levels of parental knowledge and rates of delinquency. This implies that efforts of prevention and intervention are beneficial to the parents and to the community. It should be targeted at improving the parental understanding and familiarity with youth activity, which would reduce the amount of delinquent behaviors. Prior research shows that many parents know less about what their children do and places they frequent as they get older and more independent (Chen & Jacobson, 2013). Awareness and involvement in the activities of a juvenile could reduce their likelihood of engaging in criminal activity. Further research should be done for the benefits of parent involvement in juvenile delinquency rates, as well as, its impact on the community.

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